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# San Diego County Farm Bureau

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## *FAX TRANSMISSION*

**TO:** San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board

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**DATE:** 4/1/2008

**PAGES:** 3



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March 31, 2008

Richard Wright  
Chairman  
San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board  
9174 Sky Park Court, Suite 100  
San Diego, CA 92123

**RE: *Carlsbad Desalination Project - Flow, Entrainment and Impingement  
Minimization Plan - #R9-2006-0065, NPDES No. CA 0109223 - April 9<sup>th</sup>  
Hearing, Agenda Item #7***

Dear Chairman Wright:

On behalf of the San Diego County Farm Bureau and the county's farmers, I am writing you in support of the Carlsbad Desalination Project. Our organization testified before the Regional Board in 2006 when the Board unanimously approved the project's discharge permit. The permit required Poseidon to provide the Regional Board with a Flow, Entrainment and Impingement Minimization Plan to help reduce marine impacts. Poseidon has prepared this plan to meet its obligations under the permit.

Farmers throughout San Diego are facing a predicament that could forever change the prominent contribution that agriculture makes to our regional economy, and the role farm land plays in protecting the environmental landscape.

On January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year San Diego's farm industry bore the brunt of a major cutback in imported water supplies as a result of the federal court ruling that reduced water pumped to 25 million Southern Californians from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay Delta. A 30 percent reduction in farm water use is one of the first steps in water rationing and mandatory conservation measures that could extend beyond farmers to municipal users.

Water can be the scarcest and most expensive variable associated with producing agricultural goods. We live in an arid region and farmers have always done more with less. Employing the latest conservation and reclamation practices and technology, San Diego's crop and ornamental growers have been able to remain economically competitive. But this will no longer be the case if San Diego doesn't diversify its water supply and develop local sources.

This is why the San Diego County Farm Bureau supports the Carlsbad Desalination Project. The Carlsbad Desalination Project will provide San Diego with approximately 10% of the County's drinking water supply - equal to the average annual yield from all of the County's reservoirs combined - and serve 300,000 San Diegans annually.

There are more small family farms in San Diego County than anywhere else in the United States. San Diego County is the 12th largest farm economy among all counties in the nation, and is host to more than 6,000 farmers. Our local agriculture industry ranks as the fifth largest industry in San Diego County, producing more than \$1.4 billion in crops annually. When all economic factors are considered, including payroll, purchase of goods and transportation, agriculture has a total value of \$5.1 billion to the local economy. For the farm community, water supply is not just a bottom line business issue; it is critical to the preservation of San Diego County's open space and environment.

Unless we secure a reliable water supply, San Diego's rich agricultural heritage will be changed forever. Farmers unable to afford the skyrocketing cost and overcome the unreliability of imported water supplies will look to sell their land. And as farm water supplies are redirected to supplement urban users, agricultural enterprises will suffer and allow farm land to become more readily available to developers and cities contemplating other land uses that will undoubtedly have traffic, noise and air pollution impacts.

San Diego County is mired in a historic drought, suffering through the driest consecutive years in our region's history. The Carlsbad Desalination Project is not a panacea, but it offers farmers and urban water users alike a new, affordable water supply. After nearly ten years in the works, it's time the Carlsbad facility was approved. San Diego County's agricultural industry - and our farming heritage - is counting on it.

Thank you,



Eric Larson  
Executive Director of the San Diego County Farm Bureau

CC: David King, Vice Chairman  
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